

7 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element

“With the growth of a great metropolis here, the absence of parks will make living conditions less and less attractive, less and less wholesome. Insofar, therefore, as the people fail to show the understanding, courage and organizing ability necessary to grasp the present opportunity, the growth of the region will necessarily tend to choke itself.”

Olmsted and Hall, Proposed Park Reservations for East Bay Cities, 1930

Introduction

One of the GMA’s 13 primary goals is to “Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, to conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks.” Clark County adopted its first Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan in 1965, with updates in 1975, 1981, 1987, 2000 ~~and~~, 2002, ~~and~~ 2015. ~~Now, the plan is being updated again, in coordination with the Growth Management Act (GMA). The state Growth Management Act requires local parks plans as a component of county master plans (RCW 36.70A(8) Mandatory elements of the comprehensive plan.~~

From 1997 to 2013, the county park system was jointly planned and managed with the City of Vancouver via an interlocal agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU), which was not renewed in 2013. The Clark County Parks Division was created in 2014 under the Department of Public Works and the associated Clark Parks Advisory Board was also established in 2014. Previous comprehensive plan policies were under the old MOU with the City of Vancouver. In addition, the comprehensive plan policies were from the adopted 2002 parks when the county was a joint parks provider with the City of Vancouver.

Clark County Parks Advisory Board

The Parks Advisory Board (PAB), which meets monthly to discuss projects and hear citizens’ concerns and ideas, played a key role in developing policies and capital improvement priorities. The Board of County Councilors reviews all major policy issues faced by the Parks Department.

2015 Clark County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan

Since Clark County separated from the City of Vancouver Parks Department, the 2002 Park Plan no longer applied; therefore, the County needed to develop its own parks comprehensive plan. The Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan was adopted by the Board of County Councilors on September 22, 2015.

The PROS plan provides direction for the future priorities of the parks system over the next two decades, qualifies the county for eligibility for state and federal grant resources, fulfills the requirements for a parks element within the comprehensive plan as part of the State of Washington Growth Management Act (GMA) and reflects the guidance from the Greater Clark Parks Advisory Board related to recreational needs and priorities of the community. The PAB guided the planning process for this PROS Plan from the development of the vision, mission, and goals to the recommendations, capital facilities plan, and other implementation tools.

Greater Clark Parks Mission and Vision

Vision: Clark County Parks & Recreation strengthens a high quality of life for the entire community.

Mission: Meeting community needs by providing an interconnected system of parks, trails, recreation facilities and natural areas that support environmental stewardship, diverse recreational opportunities, and economic development.

Public Involvement

The extent of community engagement and outreach utilized during the development of the PROS Plan resulted in a broad spectrum of identified park, trail, and recreational facility demands and desires for shaping the future of the county park system. The series of open houses, stakeholder group interviews, park advisory board meetings, parks advisory board member interactions, individually-submitted public comments, and online survey results helped guide the determination of priorities for the future infrastructure of parks, trails, and other outdoor recreation facilities.

Parks and Recreation Online Survey Parks-and-Recreation-Surveys

A parks online survey was posted to the county website, as well as links to the survey were sent in an email blast to stakeholders and interested parties. This online survey was conducted from February through the end of April 2015. Approximately 1500 participants completed the survey. The survey was made available at each of the open houses, shared through extensive email blasts and accessible from the Clark County website. The full survey report is located in Appendix C of the 2015 PROS.

~~A random sample, telephone surveys were conducted for the Parks Plan; 614 were surveyed. The survey was designed to elicit information regarding park and recreation preferences and usage patterns. It included questions which focused on satisfaction levels, familiarity, recreation interests, participation, and project preferences, among others. Ninety-three percent of those surveyed indicated that park and recreational services are important to the quality of life in Clark County. The majority of Clark County residents visit a neighborhood, community, or regional park or trail at least a few times a year. In general, respondents supported expanding park and recreation services and facilities. When asked what should be the highest priority for service expansion, the largest number of respondents answered “building or expanding community centers and recreation programs”, followed by purchasing open space and natural areas, building trails and walking paths, and acquiring and developing new parks.~~
Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission

~~The Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission, which meets monthly to discuss projects and to hear citizens' concerns and ideas, played a key role in developing policies and capital improvement priorities. The Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission reviews all major policy issues faced by the Parks and Recreation Department.~~
Regional Meetings

~~Five workshop-style meetings were held with community members in locations throughout the region to gather input on current park and recreation needs and priorities in the service area.~~

Focus Groups

~~Four focus group meetings were held with park and maintenance staff, recreation providers, youth, and individuals with special needs to identify recreation needs.~~

Stakeholder Interviews

~~Telephone interviews were conducted with community leaders to collect data regarding current community park and recreation priorities, needs, and opportunities.~~
Past Planning Efforts

2006 Regional Trails & Bikeway System Plan

The countywide trails and bikeway plan was prepared under the guidance of and with input from a 15-member task force of private and public agencies and interested citizens. Task force membership included representatives from bicycle, walking, and equestrian clubs, and providers of trails on public lands, including the US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Forest Service, and Washington Departments of Fisheries, Wildlife, Transportation, and Natural Resources. Additional information was gathered during two series of public workshops. The plan covers incorporated and unincorporated areas and identifies five trail types: regional multi-use trails, local trails, rustic trails, semi-primitive trails and bike lanes/pedestrian walkways. Published in April 2006 and adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, the Clark County Trails & Bikeway System Plan is incorporated by reference.

2003 Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan

The Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan, adopted in 2003, assesses landscape and natural resource protection needs and opportunities within Clark County and identifies priority acquisitions for the expenditure of conservation area funds. The planning process involved a range of public involvement

opportunities, including public meetings and surveys, as well as technical assistance provided by various advisory committees and working groups.

Existing Park and Open Space Facilities in Clark County

The ~~Vancouver- Greater~~ Clark Parks ~~and Recreation Department District~~ owns and manages approximately ~~7,335~~ 4,006 acres of park and open space lands. These lands are divided into two categories: urban and regional facilities. Urban facilities include neighborhood parks, community parks and urban open space. Regional facilities include regional parks, conservation and greenway systems, trails and special facilities. This section provides a summary of county parks and open space lands and recreational programs. (A complete inventory of county parks facilities is available from the Parks and Recreation Department.)

Urban Facilities

Urban facilities include neighborhood parks, community parks and urban open spaces. The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) suggests that a park system, at minimum, be composed of a core system of 6.25 to 10.5 acres per 1,000 persons of urban park land. Clark County owns and manages the following park system within the urban area (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 Clark County Urban Park System (Unincorporated area of VUGA only)

Type of Park Facility	Number of Facilities	Acreage Total
Neighborhood	36 <u>44</u>	187 <u>204</u> acres
Community	13 <u>12</u>	458 <u>361</u> acres
Urban Open Space	9 <u>10</u>	72 <u>236</u> acres
Joint School/park	18 <u>6</u>	117 <u>26</u> acres

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks provide access to basic recreation opportunities for nearby residents, enhance neighborhood identity, and preserve neighborhood open space. These parks are designed primarily for non-organized recreation. Located within walking and bicycling distance of most users, these parks are generally three to five acres in size and primarily serve residents within a half-mile radius. Since access is mostly pedestrian and park sites should be located so that persons living within the service area will not have to cross a major arterial street to get to the site. Neighborhood parks often include amenities such as playgrounds, turf areas, pathways and trails, picnic tables, sports courts, and benches.

Park services at the neighborhood level are provided in several ways. Schools meet an important part of the neighborhood recreational need, and some elementary school sites have been included under the neighborhood/school classification if they have neighborhood park elements. Neighborhood parks complement and expand on the services provided by school grounds. In certain areas, neighborhood parks are located adjacent to schools or involve developing and upgrading the school site.

Community Parks

Community parks provide a focal point and gathering place for broad groups of users. Usually 20 to 100 acres in size, community parks are used by all segments of the population and generally serve residents within a one- to three mile radius of the park site. Park services at the community level are

provided in several ways. Junior and senior high schools meet an important part of the community recreational need. Community parks complement and expand on the services provided by school grounds. In certain areas, community parks are located adjacent to schools or involve developing and upgrading the school site. Access to community parks may be by car, bicycle or on foot. The range of facilities provided will be greater than in neighborhood parks and will generally appeal to more diverse user groups. Community parks often include recreation facilities for organized activities, such as sports fields, skate parks, and play courts. Community parks may also incorporate passive recreation space and community facilities, such as community or senior centers. Because of their large service areas, community parks require more support facilities, such as parking and restrooms. Some middle and high school sites are included in the school/park category, since these facilities can serve some of the community park needs.

Urban Open Space

Urban open spaces are primarily undeveloped spaces, which are managed for both their natural, ecological value and for light-impact recreational use. These areas can provide relief from urban density and may also preserve or protect environmentally sensitive areas, such as endangered animal habitat and native plant communities. Public access to these areas can provide passive recreational opportunities, where compatible with resource protection. Where these greenspaces can be connected along stream corridors they provide valuable wildlife habitat and other ecological benefits. The site may or may not be improved, but can include trails, greenway corridors, and an area within a community or neighborhood park which is left in its natural state. Selection of urban green space sites is based on a variety of criteria, including linking to other open spaces, schools or public facilities, the need for open space in an area, existing parks and open space in the area and preservation of natural resources.

Urban Park Standards

The 20-Year Plan identifies a combined acquisition standard for neighborhood and community parks of ~~approximately five~~ five acres per 1,000 population. The reason for a combined neighborhood-community standard is recognition that individual neighborhood and community park standards may not be attainable in certain areas because of existing and proposed development, which may eliminate the availability of parcels large enough to accommodate these parks. Within the combined five-acre standard, the preferred distribution is two-acres for neighborhood parks and three-acres for community parks. Urban open space has a separate standard of one-acre per 1,000 population.

Neighborhood/Community Acquisition Standard

- 5 acres/1,000 population.

Neighborhood/Community Development Standard

- All neighborhood and community parks to Level II development.

Urban Open Space Acquisition Standard

- 1 acre/1,000 population.

Urban Open Space Development Standard

- Not Applicable.

The national standard for neighborhood and community parks is 6.25 to 10.5 acres per 1,000 population. While the county has adopted a level-of-service standard of five-acres, it is the city's and the county's goal to achieve the national standard. These higher standards become more critical as densities within the urban area increase.

Countywide Regional Facilities

NRPA suggests that a park system include 15 to 20 acres of regionally significant "adjunct" park facilities and additional special use and conservancy lands. The size and amount of "adjunct" park lands will vary from community to community, but must be taken into account when considering a total, well rounded system of parks and recreation areas. Clark County owns and manages approximately ~~5,007~~ 3,096 acres of park and open space land that provide service to all county residents and these parks and open space lands include ~~42~~ 18 regional parks totaling ~~2,334~~ 2,603 acres, ~~428~~ special facilities totaling 721 ~~632~~ acres, and over ~~2,542~~ 941 acres of ~~conservation and greenway systems~~ urban and regional natural areas, and the 27-mile Lewis and Clark Railroad right-of-way. In addition, the county owns and manages the 333-acre Clark County Fairgrounds/Recreational campus (Figure 25).

Regional Parks

A regional park is an area with natural or man-made qualities for outdoor recreation, such as picnicking, boating, fishing, swimming, camping and trail uses. [The 2015 PROS indicates that Regional Parks serve residents from throughout Clark County and beyond.](#) Play areas may also be included. It will typically serve several communities within one hour driving time, although closeness to population centers is desired. ~~The desirable size is 200 acres or greater. According to the 2015 PROS:~~ ["Regional Parks are larger than 50 acres in size, but may vary in size depending upon the unique characteristics, opportunities, and land availability."](#) If possible, the site should be contiguous to or encompass natural resource areas. These parks are typically located in areas with outstanding natural features or qualities. These natural features may define the boundaries of a regional park. Clark County's existing regional parks range in size from 100 to more than 325 acres.

~~Regional Conservation and Greenway Systems~~ Urban and Regional Natural Areas

[The County's 2014 Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan \(CAAP\) provides the direction and focus for conserving and connecting significant open spaces and natural resources. Clark County possesses a rich variety of landscapes and natural resources that enhance the quality of life for all Clark County residents. Natural resources range from the Columbia River to the Cascade Mountains and include a diversity of streams and lakes, marshes, wetlands, shorelines, meadows, and forests. These land and water resources provide critical habitat for fish and wildlife and provide opportunities for hiking, canoeing, picnicking, swimming, and other outdoor recreation activities. In 2009, the county created an environmental services department whose responsibilities include overseeing the Legacy Lands program. This department now takes the lead in the planning, acquisition, management, and stewardship for the county's conservation open space lands. The inventory of these existing urban and regional natural areas can be found in Appendices A and B of the PROS.](#)

~~Regional~~ Trails

The county has adopted a comprehensive Trails and Bikeway System Plan (April 2006) [and a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan \(2010\)](#) that identifies a countywide trail system, including trails for biking,

hiking and horseback riding, which is incorporated by reference. [The 2015 County PROS defines trails as](#) [As defined in the plan, trails include “any “path, route, way, right-of-way, or corridor posted, signed, or designated as open for non-motorized travel or passage by the general public.” The PROS plan goes on to define trailheads as,](#) [theas, “the place where a begins..and that... trailheads may include signage on rules and regulations and trails orientation, parking, restroom facilities, water fountains, bike racks, and recycling/trash receptacles, and necessary specialized unloading features \(ADA accessibility equestrian facilities, etc.\) where feasible.”](#) Trails serve all county residents. Five types of trails are identified in the [Trails and Bikeway System plan](#)([April 2006](#)):

- Regional multi-use trails, which provide the major access networks across the county for pedestrian and bicycle use, with equestrian use on the shoulder, where feasible.
- Local trails, whose function is to provide access from neighborhoods to regional multi-use trails or bike lanes.
- Rustic trails, which are smaller in scale than the local trail, and are intended to provide access to natural features and to provide loop trail opportunities.
- Semi-primitive trails, which are intended for rural or forest settings, where a more dispersed level of use provides for a more natural experience.
- Bike lanes and pedestrian walkways, which are located on city, county, and state road rights-of-way.

Wildlife Habitat

Wildlife habitat is composed of land, water, vegetation, and other natural resources necessary to support fish and wildlife populations. Clark County has used several methods to map and/or designate its highest priority habitat and critical/sensitive lands (e.g., high-quality wetlands). These include the Clark County Open Space Commission Report, GMA critical lands designations, Washington State Priority Habitat and Species Program, Washington Conservation Commission Fish Distribution Maps and Limiting Factors Analyses, and Lower Columbia Steelhead Conservation Initiative. While these programs utilized different methodologies to identify high-priority wildlife habitat, the results produce similar or complementary findings and lead to consistent preservation priorities.

Regional Special Facilities

Special facilities of regional significance are generally located and developed to serve one or several needs of the community for recreational, historical, cultural, environmental and educational activities. Regional special facilities range from active recreation areas such as sports field complexes and camping facilities to more passive activities such as scenic overlooks and botanical gardens. These facilities may be located within or in proximity to regional conservation and greenway areas, regional parks and/or regional trails, and may be provided by either public or private entities. There is no minimum standard or minimum size for a majority of regional special facilities however, the site must be large enough to accommodate the specific use. [The Heritage Farm located on NE 78th Street, which the county owns and operates jointly with the Washington State University agricultural extension service is an example of a special facility.](#)

Camp Bonneville

Camp Bonneville is located in southeastern Clark County, Washington, about 12 miles east of Vancouver and seven miles north of the Columbia River. It was established in 1909 as a drill field and rifle range for Vancouver Barracks and has been used primarily as a training camp for various branches of the military. The property is largely undeveloped; more than half of its six square miles is forested.

Since the U.S. Army closed Camp Bonneville in 1995, the 3,840-acre property has captured the imagination of hikers, equestrians, parks planners, wildlife enthusiasts, campers, Native American groups, and many others. After the Army closed the facility along with several others nationwide, the property was selected for transfer and reuse by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC). On October 3, 2006, after ten years of dialog and negotiation with the Army and the state Department of Ecology, the Board of Clark County Commissioners accepted transfer of property ownership from the Army to the county.

The county and its contractor will now continue the process of cleaning up the site, which includes hazardous waste contamination and unexploded military ordnance, to specifications set by the Washington State Department of Ecology. The Army will provide \$27 million over the next several years to pay for the cleanup and related insurance.

Regional Park Standards

Population-based standards for regional parks and special facilities and resource-based standards for conservation and greenway systems and trails are adopted as part of this Element.

There are no national standards for conservation and greenway systems and trails because they are based on the natural resources within a given community. NRPA guidelines state that a standard for these lands "must be part of a regional open space system plan and accompanying policies." Regional open space and trails plans have been prepared by the county and are incorporated into this 20-Year Plan.

Acquisition Goal

- ~~20~~10 acres/1,000 population

Acquisition Standard

- ~~10~~ 5 acres/1,000 population

Development Standard

- 18% of site developed

Desired minimum size

- 200 acres

Typically, greenways follow rivers, streams, creeks, ravines and other natural corridors; there is no standard or minimum size. Corridors should be of sufficient width to protect the resource. Corridors can be defined by either built or natural features, such as vegetation, bluff lines, water features, roads or other existing development.

Acquisition Standard

- Resource-based; see attached map "Regional Park and Open Space Systems"

Development Standard

- Not Applicable, but activities should be consistent with adopted management plans

The Plan also calls for trailheads with provisions for auto parking, consistent signage and interpretive markers and educational information. Public need and available funding shall guide acquisition and development (see Table 7.2). Standards for design construction are provided in the Trails and Bikeways System Plan. The county shall develop trails using the Trails and Bikeways System Plan and standards as a guide.

Acquisition Standard

- Not Applicable

Development Standard

- Guidelines provided in Trails Plan

Table 7.2 Clark County Regional Park System

Regional Parks	Current Acres	Current Deficit	Relative to Standard
Acquisition	2,334,603.4	1,580,175.6	5.968 ac/1000
Development	286,361.1	419,422.9	7.347.21% developed

**Based on 2000 park inventory

Other Agency Facilities

Federal, state, and other local agencies own and manage park, recreation and open space lands as well. Table 7.3 provides a summary of these lands and ownership. (A more detailed description is provided in the Regional Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan.)

Table 7.3 Summary of Federal, State and Local Agency Park and Open Space Land within Clark County

Jurisdiction / Agency	Acreage
US Forest Service	1,239
National Park Service	209
US Fish and Wildlife Service	6,243
Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife	3,075
Washington Dept. of National Resources	60,000
Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission	884
Port of Camas-Washougal	75
Washington Department of Transportation	16
City of Vancouver-Clark Parks & Recreation & Recreation	7,335,577
City of Camas	492,808
City of Washougal	7888
City of Battle Ground	48,140
City of Ridgefield	38,154
City of La Center	4220
Town of Yacolt	45
TOTAL	79,415

School Districts

There are eleven public school districts in Clark County. These schools provide a variety of recreational facilities, including tennis courts, soccer, baseball and football fields, tracks, basketball courts, and children's play equipment. Residents frequently use school facilities. Some school properties have developed parks on or adjoining the school site by the county with an agreement between the county and school district concerning the use of the facilities. The school will use the park during the school day, while the community will have access to it at other times. The cooperation saved money for both the city/county and the school district.

Private Facilities

Private recreational facilities exist throughout Clark County. The private facilities provide for a wide range of recreational activities generally on a fee basis. The private recreation industry influences recreation planning by providing much needed facilities, thereby easing the burden on public recreational facilities. Individual special facilities are listed in the inventory of regional special facilities (see the Regional Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan). Of note, two of the largest private landholders in Clark County are Pacific Power and Light (PP&L) and the Columbia Land Trust.

Future Park and Open Space Facilities in Clark County

Future park need was determined through a systematic examination of community needs for each category of park facility. This section presents the method used to assess the demand and need for each category of park.

Demand and Need

This section provides a general description of the analysis of demand and need for urban and regional parks. The Comprehensive Parks Plan provides the inventory, needs assessment, and project lists for the Vancouver urban area park districts and for regional parks. The six-year capital facilities list is in Section VI of this plan.

A multi-step process was used to assess demand and need for each type of park and recreational facility in Clark County. The methodology for determining demands and need varied by facility type, and the methodologies are described below. Generally, county park standards were matched against existing inventories of park land and service area populations

Urban Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

Urban park, recreation, and open space planning distinguishes between urban park needs in the Vancouver and Three Creeks urban area as well as the needs of the other cities in the county. The county currently owns and manages urban parks in the Vancouver urban unincorporated area and the Three Creeks UGA.

Vancouver Urban Area

For planning purposes, the Vancouver urban area has been divided into seven park districts. For each of these districts, a detailed process was used to assess demand and need and to develop the 20-Year Plan and the 6-year Capital Facilities Plan. First, district maps were prepared that identified zoning, water features, park inventory, drainage inventory, schools, trails, arterials, parcels, environmentally sensitive areas, priority wildlife habitat and vacant lands. Secondly, the existing and projected need for each district was calculated by comparing the existing inventory to park standards. Next, a detailed analysis of each district was conducted to determine potential park sites that could meet existing and projected needs. District acquisition priorities were prepared based on public input, and draft maps were prepared showing district priorities. The Urban Parks Plan and

Section VI of this plan describe the 20-year and 6-year demand and need for each of these park districts, respectively.

Other Cities and Towns

The county will have a more limited role in planning for the unincorporated areas around Battle Ground, Camas, La Center, Ridgefield, Washougal and Yacolt. Parks districts have not been created in these urban growth areas, but each of the cities is undertaking parks planning efforts to ensure that urban park needs are met. Consistent with the GMA directive that urban parks are provided by cities, Clark County will work with but defer to the cities to ensure that their park needs are met according to their park plans.

Regional Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

Regional Parks

A detailed process was used to assess the county's regional park needs. First, an inventory of existing regional parks and other agency facilities was conducted. This inventory is shown in the [Comprehensive Parks Plan PROS](#). Using the 10 acre per 1,000 people standard, an existing deficit of approximately ~~4,580~~ acres of regional parks was identified. Next, potential park sites were selected through a public process of evaluating locations that meet NRPA definitions of regional park facilities. These potential locations were then evaluated on the basis of zoning, water features, park inventory, drainage inventory, schools, trails, arterials, parcels, environmentally sensitive areas, priority wildlife habitat, and vacant lands. The [Comprehensive Parks Plan PROS](#) describes the inventory, needs assessment, and project list, and Section VI of this plan describes the six year capital facilities needs and funding sources.

Regional Conservation and Greenway Systems

Regional conservation and greenway systems are a resource-based category; as such, there is no population-based standard. The Regional Conservation and Greenway System is based on the county Open Space Commission's detailed evaluation of the need for additional open space. The Open Space Commission examined 5 methods for evaluating the need for additional open space in Clark County: population driven standards; resource driven standards (such as rate of depletion of a particular resource type); expert opinion; legislative and policy guidelines; and public opinion. A detailed description of this evaluation is contained in the Open Space Commission Report.

The commission concluded that, with the exception of urban open space, there are not generally accepted population-based standards for determining open space need in Clark County. In the void of established standards, the commission elected to develop planning objectives that could be applied to Clark County and would, if implemented, create an adequate system of open spaces. A complete list of these planning objectives is found in the Open Space Commission Report.

Regional Trails

As with conservation and greenway systems, trails are resource-based, not population-based. The county conducted a special trails study in 2006, which included an assessment of the need for trails. With input from the County Open Space Commission Report and previous trail planning efforts, and with additional work sessions with the Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission, a Citizen Advisory Committee, county and city staff, a network of interconnecting multi-use trails and bikeways was proposed throughout the county.

The trails are planned to utilize, where feasible, natural greenway corridors, open space and road networks, as well as portions of railroad and utility rights-of-way. The Trails Plan identifies goals for

the miles of multi-use trails, local trails, bikeways, rustic, and semi-primitive trails. The Comprehensive Parks Plan describes the inventory, needs assessment, and project list, and Section VI of this plan describes the six year capital facilities needs and funding sources.

Goals and Policies

The Growth Management Act makes many references to the importance of parks, recreation and open space. Goal 9 of the Act states that local governments should:

"Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, to conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks".

The Act calls for provision of greenbelts and open space areas within and between urban areas. Other provisions of the Act, such as those relating to the environment and public facilities and services, contain language that addresses park, recreation and open space issues. This 20-Year Plan contains the goals and policies for parks, recreation and open space, which are compiled from the [Regional Parks Plan and the Urban Parks Plan](#)^{PROS}. These goals and policies are intended to guide the acquisition and development of park facilities and recreational programs, and to provide guidance to the county's development review process. The county will continue to plan for urban parks, in cooperation with cities, in unincorporated urban areas. As a provider of countywide regional services, Clark County will focus available resources on regional facilities and services that benefit all county residents regardless of location. The service standards, needs, policies and capital facility plans in this document reflect the county's shift from a provider of both urban and regional services to a provider of regional services only.

7.0 Countywide Planning Policies

- 7.0.1 The county and each municipality shall identify open space corridors, riparian areas, important isolated open space and recreational areas within and between urban growth areas, and should prepare a funding and acquisition program for this open space. Open space shall include lands useful for parks and recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, trails, public access to natural resource lands and water, and protection of critical areas.

County 20-Year Planning Policies

Urban Parks

Goal: ~~Encourage cities to provide urban parks, open space, and recreational opportunities within urban growth areas, while ensuring that existing county-owned urban parks in unincorporated areas are properly managed and that future urban park opportunities, including greenbelt and open space areas, are preserved.~~ **Forge strong public, private, and non-profit partnerships.**

7.1 Policies

~~**Acquisition** The county's standard for urban parks shall be 6 acres per 1,000 people, with 5 acres per 1,000 people of neighborhood/community parks and 1 acre per 1,000 people of urban open space.~~ 7.1.1 ~~Within the Vancouver designated urban growth area, urban park services shall be limited to a level that reserves and makes available to the city sites for future development of neighborhood, community parks, and urban open space. Urban parks shall be acquired as consistent with the urban~~

~~park standard. Develop partnerships with public and private organizations to increase parks and recreation opportunities.~~

- 7.1.2 ~~The county shall identify open space corridors and areas, which shall include lands useful for parks and recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, trails, public access to natural resource lands and water, and protection of critical areas and water quality. Wherever possible, the natural terrain, drainage and vegetation of the community should be preserved with high quality examples contained within parks or greenbelts. Initiate the formation of a regional sports council to actively advocate for a regional sports complex to create a tournament level facility and provide valuable recreation and economic benefits.~~
- 7.1.3 ~~Within the other cities' unincorporated urban areas, where there are no existing county urban parks and where there is no current need for urban parks, the county shall not acquire urban parks. The county will actively negotiate contracts with each of the cities and towns to accept the responsibility for acquisition of urban parks. When contracts are in place for urban park acquisition in the urban unincorporated area of the cities and towns, the county will collect and manage park impact fees and will make park impact fees available to the cities and towns for acquisition purposes. Collaborate with other agencies in developing and operating parks and recreational facilities for the regional population, such as water access, trails, and regional parks.~~
- 7.1.4 ~~Urban parks shall be acquired as identified on the city or town's 20-Year Plan as the "greatest need" for that urban area; the county will attempt to incorporate provisions from each city's or town's 20-Year Plan. Cooperate with other public and private agencies, as well as with private landowners, to acquire and conserve land and other resources to provide quality park and recreation facilities.~~
- 7.1.5 ~~When cities or towns do not identify park needs in the unincorporated areas, the county should acquire community parks first. In urban areas where an adequate or suitable community park site is no longer available, or where areas are poorly served by a community park, the county shall: Encourage the acquisition of neighborhood parks; and,~~

~~Consider modification of neighborhood park standards to compensate for the lack of a community park. Specifically, consideration shall be given to increasing site size and type of development of neighborhood parks to allow for increased recreation opportunities. Facilitate active partnerships with schools, ports and utilities to help implement regional trail connections and safe routes to parks.~~

~~7.1.7—The Vancouver Clark Parks and Recreation Department will review and accept donations to be sure they are consistent with urban park plans and standards, and that they meet county criteria and guidelines for maintenance, safety, and long term responsibilities.~~

~~7.1.8—The county will assist citizens to meet their urban park need through Local Park Improvement Districts established and managed by citizens.~~

Development and Maintenance

~~7.1.9—The county will improve undeveloped neighborhood park sites in the Vancouver urban area to the "Greenspaces" level to provide a safe and secure site, which is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. The county will develop community parks with a youth sports component. Further urban park development will rely on future annexations, incorporation, or the establishment of special park districts.~~

- ~~7.1.10—In the event the City of Vancouver or a local park improvement district wishes to develop a particular site to a greater degree and is willing to take responsibility for~~

ongoing maintenance and operations, it shall be the policy of the county to allow such further development. Such development must be planned and approved jointly by county, city and park district. 7.1.11—Since the county will not be acquiring urban park sites within the unincorporated urban areas of the cities and towns except for Vancouver, the county will not develop, improve, or maintain urban parks in the urban unincorporated areas of these other cities and towns. **Regional Parks and Special Facilities**

Goal: ~~Maximize the quality of life in Clark County by providing regional open space, trails, parks and recreational opportunities and facilities, and planning to acquire, restore, enhance, preserve, develop and manage these facilities and natural resources in such a manner as to afford the maximum benefit to the community. Promote and market the county's parks system.~~

7.2 Policies ~~Acquisition~~ Preference shall be given to acquisitions, which meet one or more of the following:

- ~~Adjacent to other public ownerships, when possible; Contains unique natural features; Contains features of cultural, archeological or historical significance; Located near population centers; Is a threatened resource; Provides opportunity for joint funding, use, ownership and management;~~
 - ~~• —Provides opportunity to take advantage of special conditions that arise (e.g., land donations); and~~
 - ~~• Is identified as a priority in the Parks, Trail, or Open Space Elements of the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan.~~

- 7.2.1 ~~The county shall acquire regional park sites, which are accessible to public transportation, when possible. If public transportation is not presently available, the county shall encourage initiation of public transportation to regional park sites. Promote Clark County as an outdoor recreation and tourism destination by effectively marketing the county's parks, trails, special facilities, open spaces and natural resources.~~
- 7.2.2 ~~Evaluate whether a donation is identified as a priority in the Regional Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan, the Trail and Bikeway System Plan, the Open Space Commission Report, drainage and/or water quality plans, or other public plans, and if the proposed donation would further the goals of these plans. Establish a brand identity for Clark County Parks, with a consistent look and feel to educational and promoting materials.~~
- 7.2.3 ~~Evaluate whether a donation to the county is the best method to protect the property. The availability and appropriateness of other government agencies or private organizations should be considered by conducting an assessment of overall costs and benefits of the proposed donation. Produce mapping and "wayfinding" for parks and trails that reflects the county parks identity and adds value to the park and trail user's experience.~~
- 7.2.4 ~~Regional special facilities should be provided that meet the greatest need within the county, according to national or adopted county standards, but shall not duplicate facilities where a public need has already been adequately met and made available at a reasonable price. Enhance the county parks web presence with active engagement of social media.~~

- 7.2.5 Within the special facilities category, the county should give higher consideration to special facilities that generate revenue to offset their own maintenance and operations. The county should design and manage special facilities to accommodate compatible multiple purposes and uses, including dog parks when appropriate. Incorporate park and trail mapping and “wayfinding” into the county park website.
- 7.2.6 Coordinate with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to ensure that DNR land management decisions provide maximum benefit for park, recreation and open space, as identified in the Regional Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan. Engage CVTV to produce a series of park and trail stories that serve to inform the community about the variety of outdoor recreation resources available in the county.
- 7.2.7 A master plan should be developed for each regional park facility before the county commits to any major use of the site. Engage local media more actively to report on county parks activities, events, volunteer work parties, etc.

Development and Maintenance 7.2.8 Clark County should acquire adequate land and resource base to provide for the public park experience with publicly owned land and resources. Adjacent to such publicly owned land, private property owners should maintain the right to permitted land uses, including timber production, agriculture, and mineral extraction. Actively engage in and support Intertwine Alliance activities and events to capture the value of collaboration across organizations and agencies in the metropolitan region.

7.2.10 Management of such publicly owned land should recognize adjacent resource land practices (agriculture, forest and mineral) and shall not interfere with the continued use in accordance with federal, state and local laws and industry best management practices, of these designated lands for the production of food, agricultural products, or timber, or for the extraction of minerals.

7.2.11 Overall planning and assessment of sports field needs in Clark County shall be provided, which will include an update of field inventories and evaluations every five years and a listing of priority improvements needed at each field site.

The county will continue to work with cities, school districts, and local sports organizations in Clark County to develop a countywide system of sports fields and sports field complexes to serve the baseball, softball, soccer, and football needs of youth and adults. Cost efficiency. **Regional Conservation and Greenway Systems**

Goal: Encourage the retention of an open space system that provides parks and recreational opportunities, conserves fish and wildlife habitat, increases access to natural resource lands and provides other community benefits as identified in the Clark County Open Space Commission Report. Embrace a balanced strategy for achieving a comprehensive parks system.

7.3 Policies

- 7.3.1 The Clark County Open Space Commission Report should guide the county in meeting the county's goals for regional conservation and greenway systems. Pursue land acquisition to provide geographically accessible regional parks and equitable distribution of urban parks.

- 7.3.2 The Open Space Commission's 13 general planning objectives should guide the Planning Division in evaluating development proposals and the Parks and Recreation Department in evaluating the need and application of the open space categories identified. Those objectives are: Preserve the region's scenic beauty through protected open space areas and corridors and provide outdoor recreation, where appropriate. Clark County should fully implement the parks and recreation element of the county's 20-Year Plan.
- 7.3.3 The Open Space Commission's additional category-specific planning objectives should guide the Planning Division in evaluating development proposals and the Parks and Recreation Department in evaluating the need and application of the open space categories identified. Continue implementing the Regional Trail and Bikeway Systems Plan and coordinate with public and private stakeholders to develop a trails and bikeways network.
- 7.3.4 7.3.4 — The Clark County Open Space Commission Report guiding principals shall be adopted through adoption of the 20-Year Plan. Open discussions with parks and recreation agencies to identify high priority projects across city jurisdictions to jointly seek funding and otherwise collaborate on their implementation.

River Systems and Associated Flood Plains Clark County should attempt to preserve interconnected systems of open space along its major streams, rivers and lakes. For example, acquisitions should link Salmon Creek, Burnt Bridge Creek, Lake River and Vancouver Lake. Clark County should attempt to connect public ownerships within river systems, so as to create extended linear greenways. Clark County should strive to acquire open space lands, which allow extensive public access to shoreline properties. If wildlife, wetland or other sensitive open space values would be significantly affected by public access, consideration should be given to preserving shorelines without or with limited public access. Clark County should consider relevant state and local policies and guidelines including those set forth in the Shorelines Management Act and the county's Shorelines Master Program. Clark County should give priority consideration to shorelines of statewide significance. **Regional Trails Goal:** **Develop a network of trails and bikeways throughout the county that will interconnect population centers, community facilities, work places, neighborhoods, recreational opportunities and natural greenspaces. Ensure equity and access to parks, and trails and facilities for a healthy community.**

7.4 Policies

- 7.4.1 The policies of the 1993 countywide Trails and Bikeways System Plan shall guide the county in establishing the network of regional trails and bikeways. Accessibility: Follow the Americans with Disabilities Act and incorporate ADA Accessibility Guidelines to ensure equal and maximum accessibility for all users.
- 7.4.2 Parks: Offer a range of active and passive recreation experiences for diverse age groups, interests, and abilities.
- 7.4.3 Trail System: Promote active lifestyles by providing more trails connections and coordinating with other jurisdictions and providers to create a seamless system.
- 7.4.4 Water Access: Provide safe and appropriate water access for recreation and education and to inspire appreciation and stewardship for aquatic resources and habitat.

7.4.5 Urban walkability: Promote safe pedestrian and bicycle routes during development review to encourage connectivity between parks, trails, schools, and businesses.

Wildlife Habitat

Goal: Preserve, conserve, restore, and enhance fish and wildlife conservation areas and open space lands and raise public awareness about the importance of these resources. Provide recreational opportunities for the entire community.

7.5 Policies

7.5.1 The preservation of large contiguous blocks of fish and wildlife habitat shall be emphasized. In certain circumstances, however, it may be appropriate and desirable to acquire smaller disconnected areas that provide habitat needs in an urbanizing area, where opportunities are not available to connect habitat sites, or where a disconnected property serves an important habitat need. Offer parks, trails, and sports fields and support services to accommodate the needs of various existing users and future users with population growth and demographic changes.

7.5.2 Habitat lands should be acquired where there is a high probability of loss or conversion before acquiring habitat lands where there is a low probability of loss or conversion. This should take into consideration both actual development and property division and ownership patterns. Explore new recreational trends and engage in partnerships with user groups to develop, operate, and maintain specialized facilities.

7.5.3 A full range of implementation mechanisms should be considered to preserve and protect fish and wildlife conservation areas, including transfer of development rights, conservation easements, and current use taxation programs. Prioritize facility development based on demonstrated demand, population served, regional appeal, fiscal opportunity, and revenue generating potential.

7.5.4 Added consideration should be given to habitat lands that enhance the value of other protected abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, natural areas, or other open spaces. Expand sports fields by acquiring additional sites and providing all-season designs. Recreation facilities should be located and designed in a manner that minimizes impacts to riparian areas and other sensitive habitats.

Goal: Be responsible, effective stewards of public lands and finances.

7.6.1 Prioritize implementation to leverage the highest values benefits (“most bang for the buck”) such as short gaps between built trails to create longer more usable connections.

7.6.2 Incorporate sustainability and low impact development into design, development, and maintenance of the county park system and be a leader in sustainable building practices.

7.6.3 Use innovative and cost-effective methods to build, maintain, operate, and promote the parks, recreation, and open space system.

- [7.6.4 Cooperate with other county departments and neighboring jurisdictions to identify and conserve open space.](#)
- [7.6.5 Integrate user counts and surveys into regular operational practices to improve customer service and provide useful data for securing grants.](#)
- [7.6.6 Initiate a volunteer camp host program to increase parks' presence and hospitality at community and regional parks.](#)
- [7.6.7 Investigate feasibility of incorporating security patrols or park ranger program to ensure safety of park and trail users and protect facility infrastructure.](#)
- [7.6.8 Continually seek new opportunities to increase revenues and control expenses.](#)

Goal: Preserve our historic and cultural heritage.

- [7.7.1 Protect and improve historic and cultural features through design approaches for existing and newly acquired park and trail sites.](#)
- [7.7.2 Partner with historical organizations to enlist volunteer-based interpretation programs in parks and along trails.](#)
- [7.7.3 Develop an ongoing program to preserve, restore, and interpret historic and cultural resources.](#)
- [7.7.4 Collaborate with area historic preservation agencies.](#)

Goal: Maintain and enhance parks and recreation facilities.

- [7.8.1 Use best practices and invest in preventative maintenance.](#)
- [7.8.2 Coordinate with trail groups to develop and maintain trail projects.](#)
- [7.8.3 Promote volunteerism to enhance community ownership and stewardship of parks, trails, and natural areas.](#)
- [7.8.4 Seek higher levels of general fund support for operations and maintenance of regional parks.](#)
- [7.8.5 Advocate for allocations of fiscal resources, such as REET, to be designated to parks for capital projects.](#)
- [7.8.6 Collaborate with Transportation's sidewalk program to implement safer routes to parks and better access.](#)

Goal: Serve the community and develop a dynamic, effective organization.

- [7.9.1 Develop capital facilities plans to ensure adequate improvement and expansion of parks, trails, special facilities, and natural areas to serve existing and future populations.](#)
- [7.9.2 Involve Clark County residents in planning and programming for the parks system and provide effective community outreach to increase public awareness and support.](#)

- [7.9.3 Support staff training and development to promote the use of best practices and new technologies.](#)
- [7.9.4 Encourage Parks Advisory Board enrichment for fine-tuning the members' leadership and advocacy efforts.](#)
- [7.9.5 Advocate for additional staff resources to enable efforts on collaborating, planning, and revenue generation.](#)

Goal: [Seek adequate funding to meet community needs.](#)

- [7.10.1 Develop and maintain funding for acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of parks, recreation facilities, and trails.](#)
- [7.10.2 Actively seek innovative funding methods and use alternate methods, where feasible, to enhance efficient and effective operations.](#)
- [7.10.3 Consider stabilizing the Greater Clark Parks District's finances by protecting the maximum levy rate of 25 cents per \\$1,000 of assessed value.](#)
- [7.10.4 Aggressively pursue state, federal, and private grant resources to leverage local funding sources.](#)

Strategies

This section lists ~~three the~~ types of ~~implementation strategies or resources for implementation that could be used:~~ funding strategies, ~~other county strategies,~~ and ~~other agency strategies for parks projects.~~ Summary descriptions of these strategies are included in the [PROS Regional Parks Plan](#) and the [Urban Parks Plan](#).

Local Funding Strategies
~~Options~~
 Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account, Public Access Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account, Wetland Stewardship Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) Conservation Futures County Bonds Park Impact Fees Real Estate Excise Tax Real Estate Excise Tax—Local Conservation Areas Sales Tax Special Levy Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation State Distributed Motor Vehicle Fund Regular Property Tax User Fees Community Development Block Grants Salmon Habitat Recovery Grants

- [General Obligation Bond](#)
- [Excess Levy](#)
- [Sales Tax](#)
- [Impact Fees](#)
- [Real Estate Excise Tax](#)
- [Real Estate Excise Tax-Local Conservation Areas \(Clark County\)](#)
- [Conservation Futures Tax \(Clark County\)](#)

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Other County Strategies [Federal & State Grants and Conservation Programs](#)

- [Donations, Gifts, and Private Grants](#) Current Use Taxation Density Bonuses Shorelines Management Program State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Transfer of Development Rights Wetlands Protection Ordinance Aquifer Protection Districts Environmental Combining District Flood Plain Combining District Lake Management Districts Storm and Surface Water

~~Utilities~~~~Utility~~~~Local Improvement District~~~~Park and Recreation Service Areas~~~~Land Division~~
~~Ordinance~~~~Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (National Parks Service)~~

- ~~North American Wetlands Conservation Acts Grants Program (US Fish & Wildlife Service)~~
- ~~Wetlands Reserve Program (National Resources Conservation Service)~~

~~Other Agency Strategies~~Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office Grant Programs

- ~~Forest Practices—Conversion of Timber Lands~~~~Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area~~~~FmHA Conservation Easements~~~~Forest Legacy Program~~~~Land Trusts~~~~Public/Private Utility Corridors~~~~Washington State Upland Wildlife Habitat Restoration Program~~~~Washington State Wetlands and Riparian Initiative~~~~Park and Recreation District~~~~Metropolitan Park District~~~~Metropolitan Municipal Corporation~~~~Parks Foundation~~~~Hydraulic Code~~~~Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account~~
- ~~Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program~~
- ~~Land and Water Conservation Fund~~
- ~~National Recreational Trails Program~~
- ~~Youth Athletic Facilities Program~~
- ~~Salmon Recovery Funding Board~~

~~Transportation Enhancements~~

- ~~U.S. Department of Transportation~~

~~Other Methods & Funding Sources~~

- ~~Metropolitan Park District~~
- ~~Park and Recreation District~~
- ~~Business Sponsorships/Donations~~
- ~~Interagency Agreements~~
- ~~Private Grants, Donations, & Gifts~~

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Several other strategies should be considered for implementation in addition to the projects and funding sources shown in the Capital Facilities Plan.

Capital Facilities Plan

The Parks and Recreation Department conducted a public process to identify the overall park, recreation, and open space priorities and to identify implementation strategies to accomplish the priority projects over the next six years. Criteria were developed and used to rank the projects by and between park categories.

Potential funding sources were identified from the list of implementation strategies, and matched with the priority park projects. ~~The Capital Facilities Plan and Six-year Priorities Projects can be found in Appendix A of the PROS. These priority park projects were listed in tables identifying the year of project implementation. The tables representing the priority capital projects for the Vancouver Clark Parks and Recreation Department are presented in the Supporting Documentation to the Comprehensive Plan.~~

Alternative Funding Sources

As the county evaluates and implements the Capital Facilities Plan, it should give consideration to additional funding sources. The following potential additional local assessments could provide funding should there be funding shortfalls.

Real Estate Excise Tax: Local Conservation Area

With voter approval, the Board of County Commissioners may impose an excise tax on each sale of real property in the county at a rate not to exceed one percent of the selling price for the purpose of acquiring and maintaining conservation areas. The authorizing legislation (RCW 82.46) defines conservation areas as "land and water that has environmental, agricultural, aesthetic, cultural, scientific, historic, scenic, or low-intensity recreational value for existing and future generations." These areas include "open spaces, wetlands, marshes, aquifer recharge areas, shoreline areas, natural areas, and other lands and waters that are important to preserve flora and fauna."

Sales Tax: 0.2% Additional Assessment

Within existing state statute, the county could collect an additional two-tenths of one percent sales tax. In this case, the statute provides an electoral process for repealing the tax or altering the rate. This tax is now in effect in Clark County at the rate of three-tenths of one percent. Of the three-tenths being collected, two-tenths have been assigned to law enforcement services. In addition, revenues derived from the three-tenths sales tax collected in the City of Vancouver are directed to the county in exchange for certain services; by not collecting the tax the city is also entitled to certain other state-distributed revenues.

Special Levy

Washington law allows counties, along with other specified junior taxing districts, to levy additional property taxes in excess of limitations imposed by statute when authorized by the voters. Levy approval requires 60 percent majority vote at a general or special election.

Cooperative Partnerships

In addition to direct funding of programs, the goals of the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plans can be reached through cooperative partnerships with other agencies and citizen groups. This section describes several cooperative partnerships that should be pursued by the county.

State and Federal Land Trades

The state and federal governments own nearly 69,000 acres of land in Clark County, with the state Department of Natural Resource (DNR) owning 60,000 acres by itself. To better manage their lands, DNR has sought (and will likely continue to seek) to consolidate their land holdings through land trades or sales. The county should seek to work with DNR and other state and federal agencies to identify cooperative opportunities to meet county park, recreation and open space goals.

Storm and Surface Water Utilities

As provided by state law, Clark County could implement a Storm and Surface Water Utility to better manage water resources. The activities of such a utility could involve protection and restoration of wetlands, ponds or other water-related areas that provide important open space and trail corridors. The county should continue to investigate the feasibility of such a utility that would support the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plans and the goals of the county's Water Quality Division.

Park and Recreation Districts and Service Areas

Where there is sufficient citizen interest, the county should explore the use of citizen managed Parks and Recreation Districts to meet their urban park needs. These districts, independently operated, could cooperatively help meet the need for urban parks, having the ability to acquire, operate and maintain parks.

Volunteer Programs

| The ~~Vancouver-Greater~~ Clark Parks and ~~and Recreation~~ Department should continue and build on its existing volunteer programs to provide citizen partnerships that improve the quality of county park facilities while reducing the county's financial burden. Adopt-A-Trail and Adopt-A-Greenway programs are examples of volunteer programs that have been successfully implemented elsewhere.